



Holistic Homes | studiofour

HERO IMAGE Ruxton Rise Residence by studiofour
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ARCHITECT & DESIGNER INTERVIEWS, DESIGNERS, NEW, THE LOOK

We're continuing our 'Holistic Homes' interview series with studiofour co-director and architect Annabelle Berryman.

Speaking with Annabelle Berryman, we discuss how materials can capture the 'genius loci' or the 'spirit' of a site, the far-reaching and deep-rooted benefits of improving a home's connection to nature and the architect's perspective on promoting sustainable practices in residential design for the future.



What does 'living holistically' mean to you?

Annabelle Berryman: For studiofour, living holistically means focusing on all aspects of one's life, including physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. Central to this is the connection between individuals and their built and natural environment.



What does 'designing holistically' mean to you?

Annabelle Berryman: Our approach to all projects combines architecture, interiors and landscape disciplines to provide a holistic design solution. This is key to the creation of each bespoke project vision. Also paramount to our approach is breaking down the boundaries between disciplines to allow each to bleed into another, to create a cohesive and highly considered outcome.





What are your favourite sustainable materials to work with?

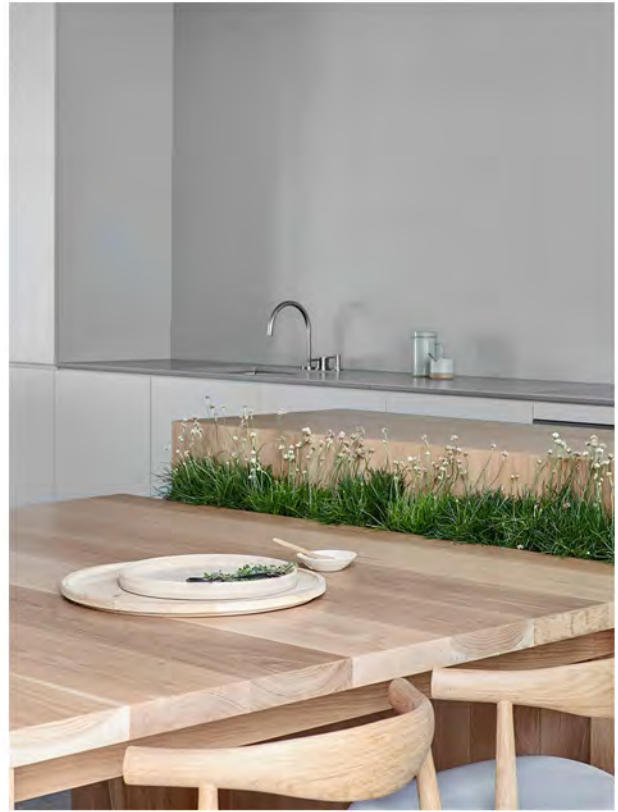
Annabelle Berryman: Our focus is always to capture the 'genius loci' or the 'spirit' of a site – through all aspects of our response, including materiality. Our end goal is to create a sustainable residence, part of which is ensuring that the materials respond directly to the context of the site. For example, we are currently working on a retreat tucked away in the sand dunes of an environmentally sensitive site. We decided early on in the project that the sand and organic material displaced during construction and the building rubble left over from the demolition of the existing house would provide the ingredients for the new home's rammed-earth construction.

How do health and wellness practices go hand-in-hand with design?

Annabelle Berryman: We believe we have a responsibility as architects to deliver built environments that enhance our client's health and well-being. To do so, buildings need to move beyond optimising single parameters such as temperature and humidity to consider human health, behaviours, responses and outcomes.

One of the most obvious ways to improve our client's well-being is to connect them with nature; connecting with nature is one of the easiest ways to practise mindfulness. Outdoor spaces don't have to be pristine or even particularly majestic for us to feel some emotional and cognitive benefits.







Building on that, in an interview, you were quoted as saying, "studiofour's approach to the built environment is to constantly strive for a unity with nature." Can you please elaborate on this?

Annabelle Berryman: Our design approach integrates buildings with their natural environment through various techniques, including incorporating natural materials, maximising natural light and ventilation, creating views and aspects, and designing structures to blend seamlessly with their surroundings.

Homes need to do away with conventional boundaries and open up the idea of an infinite unity with nature. Our design approach is born from this belief that the landscape doesn't just surround the architecture; it's central to it. For this reason, we place as much significance on outdoor spaces as we do internal living spaces.

What major changes do you hope to see concerning sustainability and residential architecture over the next five to ten years?

Annabelle Berryman: We acknowledge that if we use resources to build a new home, the design has to harness all opportunities to address the sustainable and ecological issues facing our planet today.

We, as a society, have come a long way in terms of our knowledge about sustainable initiatives and design. However, we would like to see designers not only focus on providing a sustainable shelter and a home that promotes and encourages sustainable practices.

The lifestyles that our buildings support should drive change in behaviours and attitudes. They should foster and promote a deeper understanding of our natural world and respect for its vulnerability. Only by respecting and understanding nature can humans take action to reduce their impact on the planet and begin to mitigate the effects of climate change.





If you could deliver one message to the architecture and design community right now, what would it be?

Annabelle Berryman: Firstly, we must rectify the current disconnect from nature. Today's high-tech society is suffering a disconnect from nature. We often see evidence of this in residential design, where the landscape hasn't been properly accounted for. Now is the time to harness our love and respect for the natural world and undo the damage already done.

Secondly, we have a responsibility to help others understand our natural world. Let us continue to design buildings that help our clients obtain a deeper appreciation and understanding of nature, making them more inclined to protect it.





“The role of architecture,
we believe, is to promote
a better understanding of
the natural world.”

– Annabelle Berryman

